

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 6590

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, KS

SUBJECT: ROKG CONCERN ABOUT POLITICAL ACTIVITIES OF FOREIGN
MISSIONARIES

1. DURING CALL BY AMBASSADOR AND GLEYSTEN ON PRESIDENTIAL
SPECIAL ADVISOR ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS CHOE KYU HA, CHOE
RAISED IN LOW KEY BUT POINTEDLY THE INCREASED ROKG CONCERN
ABOUT SOME POLITICAL ACTIVITIES OF FOREIGN MISSIONARIES.

2. CHOE SAID THAT THE ROKG WELL REALIZED SENSITIVITY
INVOLVED IN ANY PUNITIVE GOVERNMENT ACTIONS AGAINST MISS-
IONARIES AND HAS NO RPT NO INTENTION OF TAKING ANY ACTION
AGAINST MISSIONARIES AT PRESENT TIME. ROK RECOGNIZED
SENSITIVITY OF SUCH ACTIONS IN TERMS OF FOREIGN REACTIONS.
AT SAME TIME HOWEVER HE SAID SOME FOREIGN MISSIONARIES
ARE ENGAGING IN POLITICAL ACTIONS IN VIOLATION OF ROKG
IMMIGRATION LAWS GOVERNING THEIR STATUS IN THE COUNTRY.

3. CHOE SAID THERE HAD BEEN HIGH-LEVEL GOVERNMENT MEETING
ON POLITICAL ACTIVITIES OF MISSIONARIES AND DECISION
TAKEN NOT TO UNDERTAKE ANY PUNITIVE ACTIONS. GOVERNMENT
SAW NO PROBLEM WITH FOREIGN MISSIONARY ACTIONS DEALING
WITH POLITICAL ISSUES IF THEY ARE LIMITED TO SUBMISSION
OF PETITIONS, SERMONS AND PARTICIPATION IN SERVICES OR
ACTIVITIES IN CHURCHES. HOWEVER, IN RECENT DEMONSTRATIONS
OUTSIDE OF CHURCH CONFINES SOME FOREIGN MISSIONARIES HAD
PARTICIPATED ACTIVELY, FOREIGNERS HAVE BEEN IN FRONT RANKS
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AND HAVE EVEN CARRIED ANTI-GOVERNMENT PLACARDS. CHOE SAID

GOVERNMENT DOES FEEL THAT THAT KIND OF PUBLIC POLITICAL ACTIVITY WENT WELL BEYOND LIMITS OF BEHAVIOR EXPECTED OF "GUESTS" OF ROK UNDER IMMIGRATION LAWS. FURTHER, GIVEN TENDENCY OF MANY KOREANS TO BE OVERLY IMPRESSED BY EXAMPLE OF FOREIGNERS CHOE SAID GOVERNMENT FELT SUCH PUBLIC CONDUCT COULD BE MISINTERPRETED.

4. COMMENT: CHOE, IN HIS MANNER AND IN HIS WORDS, CLEARLY WAS NOT RPT NOT THREATENING ANY EARLY ACTION AGAINST FOREIGN MISSIONARIES. AT SAME TIME, HE WAS OBVIOUSLY PUTTING ROKG ON RECORD WITH US AS BEING MORE CONCERNED ABOUT CERTAIN ASPECTS OF FOREIGN MISSIONARIES' POLITICAL ACTIVITIES.

5. IT IS TRUE THAT IN RECENT CHRISTIAN DEMONSTRATIONS THERE HAS BEEN SOME PARTICIPATION BY FOREIGN CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS, INCLUDING AMERICANS. DEPARTMENT IS ALSO AWARE OF EARLIER PROBLEMS WE HAD WITH SOME PROTESTANT MISSIONARIES.

6. AS MATTER OF COURSE WE DO INFORMALLY CAUTION AMERICAN MISSIONARY CONTACTS WHO ARE ENGAGED IN OVERT POLITICAL ACTIVITIES THAT THEY ARE UNDER KOREAN LAW AND AS FOREIGNERS ONLY HAVE RIGHT TO SAME TREATMENT UNDER KOREAN LAW AS KOREAN CITIZEN. WITHOUT DIRECTLY REFERRING TO CHOE'S COMMENTS, WE INTEND DISCREETLY AND INFORMALLY TO TELL OUR RELIGIOUS CONTACTS THAT THERE IS INCREASING GOVERNMENT CONCERN ABOUT ACTIONS WHICH ARE CONSIDERED BEYOND ITS INFORMAL GROUND RULES, SPECIFICALLY PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC ANTI-GOVERNMENT DEMONSTRATIONS.
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